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SUBJECT: NINEWA: GEO CHAIRMAN CONCERNED OVER PROVINCIAL  
ELECTIONS INTEGRITY

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Team Leader Alex Laskaris: Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

1.(C) Summary. The Ninewa Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Chairman has serious concerns about the integrity of 21 voting sites, most of which are in Kurdish-controlled areas of the province. The Chairman says he is making progress on elections preparations, although he continues to worry about logistics, the potential importation of Kurdish voters into Tel Afar, and a troublesome deputy. Thanks to the intervention of MND-N, the Ninewa Operations Command (NOC) has agreed to provide the Chairman with a security detail. End Summary.

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GEO CONCERNS  
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12. (C) The PRT and Third Armored Cavalry Regiment (3ACR) met with the Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Chairman, Abdel Khaleq al-Dabbagh, on December 7 to discuss preparations for upcoming provincial elections. Dabbagh said that he is primarily worried about 21 voting centers, most of which lie inside areas under the de facto control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). According to Dabbagh, Peshmerga and Asa'esh (Kurdish secret police) are preventing the Internal Security Forces (ISF) from inspecting voting centers in the districts of Tel Kaif, Hamdaniya and Shaikhan in the northeast of Ninewa. Dabbagh said that he wanted the National Police (NP) to inspect and provide security for the polling centers. He claimed that the Iraqi Police (IP) are generally unreliable and infiltrated by terrorists.

13. (C) Dabbagh expressed concern about Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) attempts to import voters into Rabia and Zummar in Tel Afar district. He said the KDP is also trying to exert influence through its Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)-appointed deputy in the GEO. The Chairman claimed that the deputy is making inappropriate attempts to gather data on candidates, including home addresses. Dabbagh also said he was also worried about logistical details, especially the storage of elections materials at Mosul airport. Finally, Dabbagh expressed concern for his personal safety. The GEO compound, where he and his second wife and children live, has static security, but he has no Personal Security Detail (PSD). (Note: MND-N Deputy CG Brown subsequently contacted the NOC commander on this issue; the NOC agreed to provide Dabbagh with a personal security detail immediately. End Note)

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PRT RESPONSES  
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14. (C) We emphasized that the credibility of the election

process is a top concern for the USG and the GOI. We requested a list of the 21 problematic sites, which the PRT would share with the Embassy, the UN and other relevant parties to help ensure the integrity of the election process. Dabbagh also agreed to work with the PRT to help identify sites where observers would be most needed.

¶15. (C) We also suggested that Dabbagh could nominate a Kurdish replacement for his current KDP deputy. Dabbagh said that he had already done so, but did not have the votes on the IHEC to replace the incumbent.

¶16. (C) With regard to logistics, 3ACR offered to arrange a meeting after the Eid al-Adha holiday of the GEO, the ISF's Ninewa Operations Command, the PRT and the US military at the Mosul airport VIP room. At that meeting, all sides can work out logistical arrangements that keep US hands off the process, but which also ensure security.

¶17. (C) Comment: Dabbagh is a strong GEO chairman, who is responsive to our concerns, eager to work with our NGO partners, and technically sound. His concerns should be taken seriously. In order to ensure as credible an election as possible, it is essential to go over the 21 problematic sites with Dabbagh one-by-one. We have asked for additional information on all his allegations of impropriety and will follow them up to the best of our ability. End Comment.  
CROCKER